The Need to Update Infantry Company Doctrine in Light of Recent Detainee Abuse

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**The Need to Update Infantry Company Doctrine in Light of Recent
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Background

On January 3rd, 2004, American infantrymen from the 4th Infantry Division pushed two Iraqis from a bridge into the Tigris. The soldiers were running a vehicle check point and after searching the Iraqis' vehicle and finding only bathroom fixtures, the soldiers took the two men who were out after curfew to the bridge and began questioning them. The Iraqis were being uncooperative and were out after curfew, so the soldiers threw them off the bridge. Unfortunately, uncooperative locals out after curfew is a common event in Iraq and Afghanistan. Holding detainees and extracting information from them is not a task that infantrymen train on or that infantry doctrine supports, yet it is a mission that commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan are forced to give their men. Given the right doctrine based training, this event could have been avoided. Recent allegations of detainee abuse shows there is a doctrinal gap in prisoner operations at the Infantry Company Level that the Army must close by rewriting Infantry Company and Platoon level publications.

Doctrine and Abu Ghraib

Doctrine forms the basis from which leaders train their units. Lieutenant General Anthony R. Jones, the senior Army investigating officer at Abu Ghraib, notes the importance of doctrine and the role it plays in Army training,

"Doctrine is meant to be a guideline to focus efforts in a specific area. Doctrine is the culmination of years of experience, Doctrine allows leaders at all levels to adapt to the different environments and situations that their units may encounter. When prosecuting hostilities, doctrine does not replace the inherent responsibilities of commanders to execute their missions, care for the safety and security of their Soldiers, train their Soldiers and their organizations to be competent and confident in their assigned duties and responsibilities, or uphold the rule of law and legal authority such as the Geneva Convention...Had Army doctrine and training been followed, the abuses at Abu Ghraib would not have occurred."[1]

He goes on to cite the gap in doctrine between Military Police and Military Intelligence when conducting detainee operations, noting that the guard/interrogator relationship is not clearly defined and leaves many areas of confusion. The result, as LTG Jones notes, is abuse such as occurred at Abu Ghraib.

Alleged Abuse by the 82nd Airborne Division

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[1] LTG Anthony R. Jones. "AR 15-6 Investigation of the Abu Ghraib Prison and 205th Military Intelligence Brigade,": 19-20.

Evidence of the doctrine gap is illustrated in alleged prisoner abuse by the 82nd Airborne Division at Camp Mercury, outside Fallujah, Iraq. In this instance, a battalion of light infantry was operating a detention facility where prisoners were being held for interrogation. LTG Jones noted that at Abu Ghraib, "...the delineation of responsibilities for interrogations between the military intelligence and military police may not have been understood by some Soldiers and some leaders."[2] A sergeant from the 82nd ABN DIV noted the same confusion over the guard/interrogator role that LTG Jones noted at Abu Ghraib. "Someone from [Military Intelligence] told us these guys don't get no sleep. They were directed to get intel [intelligence] from them so we had to set the conditions by banging on their cages, crashing them into the cages, kicking them, kicking dirt, yelling."[3] This NCO's statement raises questions regarding detainee responsibility to which no answers were provided. It was not clear to the sergeant, who was in charge of the detention center which interrogation techniques his soldiers were authorized to conduct. There is no specification, doctrinal or otherwise, as to who the guard force should answer

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[2] Ibid., 20.

[3] Anonymous Army Sergeant, Human Right's Watch. http://hrw.org/reports/2005/us0905/2.htm#_Toc115161401

to when the military intelligence interrogators are in charge of the detention facility and infantry forces act as guards.

Before deploying, this sergeant's battalion trained on handling enemy prisoners of war as they are currently described in ARTEP 7-10-MTP. The method prescribed in ARTEP 7-10-MTP involves the "5 S's" of search, segregate, silent, safeguard, and speed to the rear. Under this model, infantry companies and soldiers do not serve as detainee guards for extended periods of time. Instead, detainees are pushed to higher units as quickly as possible. As currently written, this unit did not have the necessary skills to handle detainees.

On the current asymmetric battlefield, this principle of "speed to the rear" is not always advantageous. A company or battalion often holds detainees for days or weeks while trained military interrogators extract intelligence relevant to the area they are operating in. This is what happened at Camp Mercury with Iraqi nationals taken during operations in Fallujah. Current doctrinal publications do not address this extended operations format.

Training Manual Shortfalls

The infantry company commander uses a number of tools to develop his company's training plan when preparing for a deployment. These tools, when used in conjunction with his

Mission Essential Task List (METL) allow him to create his company training plan. Although the training plan is originally based off his company's general mission statement, upon notification of deployment, it is adjusted based on the deployment environment. In the current operating environment of Iraq and Afghanistan, both the METL and training plan of the rifle company has gone through some changes to meet the mission's many demands.

As explained in FM 7-0, once a commander determines his unit's METL, he must use the Army Training and Evaluation Program Manual (ARTEP) to articulate all other tasks. For the infantry rifle company, this means ARTEP 7-10 MTP which was last updated in October 2000. Missions that were not templated for infantry forces (or not imagined at all for military forces) are now being executed on a daily basis in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The ARTEPs are designed to guide training; however, based off the current operating environment, they don't address the current mission profile to include collective, individual, and leader tasks.

The Army's Doctrinal Stop Gap

It should be noted that professional organizations such as the Infantry Association and the Center for Army Lessons Learned

(CALL) publish monthly newsletters that circulate the experience

of company commanders on the ground, in an attempt to pass along

the hard fought lessons learned to the next group of leaders.

This can only go so far though. Again, as LTG Jones notes,

"Doctrine is the culmination of years of experience"[4] and is not

merely the experience of one commander on the ground that an

editor thinks can apply to the Army as a whole. Beacuse

professional journals and forums can only do so much, it is

important to realize the role doctrine plays in our preparation

for war and adapt it to meet the changing battlefield.

A second counter to the need for an immediate update to

doctrine is that the resident knowledge already exists inside of

the Army and can therefore be task organized to meet the demands

on the ground. Units are regularly task-organized to meet

specific operational objectives that they are not trained for.

Detainee operations is just one example. As Captain Bill

Perkins, a company executive officer in Iraq notes, "[I was told]

to take charge of the attached squad of MPs and build a detainee

facility there...I had no idea how to do that, but the E-7

National Guard MP laid out that each prisoner had to have so many

square feet, so much room to stand up, so much separation, so

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[4] Jones, 19.

many hours of sleep each day, etc. And this was with NO guidance

from higher, zero. But he made sure, as did all his guys, that we

did the right thing, even though we had no materials except a

little plywood and concertina."[5] There is no doubt that American

soldiers want to achieve every mission given to them, but their

leadership must give them the tools necessary to complete the

task.

While <u>FM 34-52, Intelligence Interrogation</u>, does describe

overlapping roles for Military Police and Military Intelligence

soldiers who are detaining and interrogating detainees, it does

not describe command and support relationships. Further, it does

not address how the infantry company should be integrated into

this already confusing role. In many cases, a needed skill set

is resident inside of the Army, but just as the infantry company

does not have a set standard for detainee operations, neither

does the Army at large.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Today's infantry company commander is being tasked with more

than commanders have historically been given. In order to be

successful, infantry company commanders and the soldiers under

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[5] Captain William Perkins, USA, Infantry Company Executive Officer, email correspondence with the author, 7 November 2005.

them must have access to lessons learned and must be equipped with relevant doctrine. Detainee operations put soldiers very close to the enemy they are fighting, and as recent account show, infantry company commander are not being equipped with the tools necessary for success in these situations. Every time prisoner abuse is alleged, it hurts American forces, however despite abuse, killings, and recognized shortcomings in doctrine, the Army has not address this gap. Soldiers currently deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan have the same training shortfalls they did at the beginning of the war; lessons are not being communicated and institutionalized. As LTG Jones noted, doctrinal gaps did not cause abuse by the 82nd ABN DIV, but the absence of these gaps could have prevented it. The Army must do everything it can to prevent future abuse, and it has not. The time has come to update FM 7-8 and FM 7-10 to reflect today's mission requirements.

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